

Message Text

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SUBJECT: OPIUM BAN NEWS ITEM

FOLLOWING ARTICLE APPEARED IN THE NEW YORK TIMES, MAY 5,
1974:

QUOTE: U.S. STUDIES PLAN TO GROW OPIUM

MEDICINAL NEED IS CITED IN WAKE OF TURKEY'S BAN

BY MARTIN TOLCHIN. WASHINGTON, MAY 4 -- THE NIXON ADMINIS-
TRATION, WHICH IN 1971 PERSUADED THE TURKISH GOVERNMENT TO
BAN THE PLANTING OF OPIUM POPPIES IN A CAMPAIGN AGAINST
NARCOTICS ADDICTION, IS CONSIDERING A PLAN TO GROW OPIUM
IN THE UNITED STATES.

A TENTATIVE WHITE HOUSE PLAN CALLS FOR GROWING 400 ACRES
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OF OPIUM POPPIES ON AN EXPERIMENTAL BASIS, EQUALLY DIVIDED

BETWEEN TWO LOCATIONS, NEAR WALLA WALLA, WASH., AND PHOENIX, ARIZ. THE POPPIES WOULD BE GROWN INSIDE MILITARY-STYLE INSTALLATIONS AND WOULD YIELD 160 TONS, SLIGHTLY MORE THAN HALF THE ANNUAL MEDICAL CONSUMPTION IN THE UNITED STATES, WHICH WAS 300 TONS LAST YEAR.

SOME ADMINISTRATION OFFICIALS AND PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES THAT FAVOR THE PLAN SAY A DOMESTIC OPIUM CROP IS NEEDED TO

EASE THE SHORTAGE THAT HAS ENSUED SINCE TURKEY'S BAN. CRITICS BELIEVE, HOWEVER, THAT THE SHORTAGE HAS BEEN EXAGGERATED, AND THEY FEAR THAT DOMESTIC PRODUCTION OF OPIUM WOULD LEAD TO ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC. THEY ALSO CON- TEND DOMESTIC PRODUCTION IS SOUGHT BY THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES SOLELY TO REDUCE THE PRICE OF OPIUM.

OFFICIALS OF THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES ARE SCHEDULED TO MEET WITH FEDERAL OFFICIALS AT THE WHITE HOUSE NEXT WEEK, THE LATEST IN A SERIES OF MEETINGS ON THE SUBJECT.

"THERE IS A CONCERN OF WHAT WE SHOULD DO BECAUSE OF THE OPIUM SHORTAGE,"SAID KENNETH R. COLE JR., PRESIDENT NIXON'S CHIEF DOMESTIC ADVISER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THE PRESIDENT'S DOMESTIC COUNCIL. "THERE IS A QUESTION OF WHETHER OR NOT WE SHOULD GROW OPIUM."

'UNCONSCIONABLE' IDEA

HOWEVER, JOHN R. BARTLES JR., ADMINISTRATOR OF THE FEDERAL DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION, SAID, "I FEAR THAT THE EXTENT OF THE SHORTAGE HAS BEEN GREATLY EXAGGERATED BY THE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES.

REPRESENTATIVE LESTER L. WOLFF, DEMOCRAT OF QUEENS AND NASSAU, CHAIRMAN OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL NARCOTICS CONTROL OF THE HOUSE FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE, SAID "IT'S UNCONSCIONABLE THAT OUR GOVERNMENT WOULD EVEN GIVE CONSIDERATION TO THIS IDEA, INASMUCH AS WE HAVE LAID SUCH HEAVY EMPHASIS ON THE TURKS' NOT GOING INTO THE BUSINESS.

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"THIS ACTION HAS ENCOURAGED SOME OF THE TURKISH RESISTANCE TO OUR RECOMMENDATIONS THAT THEY NOT ENTER THE BUSINESS."

THE PLAN WOULD NOT BE IMPLEMENTED UNTIL THE NEW TURKISH GOVERNMENT MADE A FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER TO CONTINUE THE BAN. DURING LAST FALL'S ELECTIONS IN TURKEY,

BULENT ECEVIT, LEADER OF THE VICTORIOUS REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY, PLEDGED TO END THE BAN. IN FEBRUARY, TURKEY ASKED THE UNITED STATES TO UNDERTAKE A JOINT RE-EXAMINATION OF THE BAN. THE REQUEST IS STILL PENDING.

UNITED STATES EXPERTS SAID THAT, BEFORE 1972, 80 PERCENT OF ALL HEROIN SOLD TO AMERICAN ADDICTS HAD ORIGINATED IN TURKEY.

"WE'RE NOT EVEN GOING TO SUBMIT OPTIONS TO THE PRESIDENT UNTIL WE'RE SURE WHAT THE TURKS ARE DOING," SAID A WHITE HOUSE AIDE.

THE PROPOSAL TO GROW OPIUM IN THE UNITED STATES IS SUPPORTED BY THE THREE PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANIES THAT USE OPIUM IN THE PRODUCTION OF MEDICINES: MALLINCKRODT CHEMICAL WORKS OF ST. LOUIS, MERCK AND CO. OF RAHWAY, N.J. AND S.B. PENICK OF MANHATTAN.

'CRITICAL' SHORTAGE

IN A JOINT POSITION PAPER, THE COMPANIES ASSERTED THAT "AS THE THREE UNITED STATES IMPORTERS OF CRUDE OPIUM, THESE COMPANIES HAVE BECOME AWARE THAT THE WORLD SUPPLY OF OPIUM REQUIRED TO MEET LEGITIMATE MEDICAL DEMAND FOR MORPHINE, CODEINE AND OTHER OPIUM DERIVATIVES HAS BECOME DANGEROUSLY INADEQUATE."

"INsofar AS THE UNITED STATES NEEDS ARE CONCERNED, THIS OPIUM SHORTAGE HAS NOW REACHED CRITICAL PROPORTIONS," THEY SAID.

THE DRUG COMPANIES SAID CONSUMPTION OF CODEINE IN THE UNCLASSIFIED

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UNITED STATES HAD INCREASED FROM 20,459 KILOGRAMS IN 1967 TO 30,805 IN 1972 AND WAS PROJECTED FOR A TOTAL OF 41,000 IN 1974. ANTINARCOTIC OFFICIALS ARE CONCERNED OVER THE RAPID INCREASE IN SALES OF COUGH SYRUPS CONTAINING CODEINE AND THEIR ILLEGAL SALE TO MINORS.

IN THE MID-NINETEEN-SIXTIES, TURKEY SUPPLIED MOST OF THE UNITED STATES' DOMESTIC NEEDS. TODAY, ALL UNITED STATES OPIUM IMPORTS COME FROM INDIA, WHICH DOUBLED ITS CROP FROM 485 TONS TO 1,000 TONS BETWEEN 1965 AND 1972. HOWEVER, WEATHER CONDITIONS IN INDIA MAKE OPIUM POPPIES AN UNDEPENDABLE CROP.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE SHORTAGE, WHY NOT ENCOURAGE TURKEY TO RESUME OPIUM PRODUCTION? UNITED STATES OFFICIALS FEAR

THAT A SUBSTANTIAL PROPORTION OF A TURKISH CROP WOULD AGAIN
END TO AN ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFIC.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLFF HAS THE SAME FEARS, HOWEVER, CONCERN-
ING DOMESTIC PRODUCTION. END QUOTE. RUSH

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